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RALPH WALDO EMERSON'S CONCEPT OF NATURE AS MANIFESTED THROUGH LITERARY DEVICES

by

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RALPH WALDO EMERSON'S CONCEPT OF NATURE AS MANIFESTED THROUGH LITERARY DEVICES

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Much has been said about Emerson and his writings. Work has been done in understanding his Transcendentalist theory and his influence on other writers of his time and after. Little has been done in the study of literary devices used by Emerson; therefore, this study will concentrate on Emerson's concept of nature as manifested through his literary devices.

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. The purpose of this study was (1) to ascertain Emerson's concept of nature as manifested in Nature, "The Poet," "Circles," and "Nature," (2) to identify the literary devices used for nature, and (3) to evaluate the effectiveness of Emerson's usage of literary devices for nature.

Justification of the study. Emerson should be studied in depth, as it was he who became a spokesman of nineteenth century America. In the past, studies on Emersonian literary devices have been limited to the organic metaphor or the symbolism used by Emerson. This limitation to the organic metaphor can possibly be explained by the fact that Emerson himself was obsessed by the idea of nature

as a metaphor, and he introduced the idea of an organic metaphor to the literary world. Yet Emerson uses all types of literary devices in his works. Thus, to really understand Emerson, one must make a more extensive study, examining all literary devices rather than limiting the study to one device. By concretely showing the literary devices found in Emerson's writings on nature, one can reach a conclusion as to whether Emerson effectively uses the literary devices.

Since Emerson's first essay, Nature, has the seeds of thought for all his future essays, Nature will be a key reference. Three other essays dealing specifically with nature, "The Poet," "Circles," and "Nature," will also be studied in great detail. Other writings of Emerson will be referred to when they have specific relevance to the discussion.

Through this study a better understanding of Emerson can be developed. Only through intensive-extensive study can a teacher fully appreciate and understand a writer and effectively present the writer and his works to the students in the classroom.

Secondary sources as shown in the bibliography will be read to aid in discussing Emerson's views on nature. From the primary and secondary sources, a basic concept of Emerson's idea of nature will be ascertained and an Emersonian definition of nature can be given.

This concept of nature will be reached only after careful examination of the primary sources for the literary devices used for the word nature. The following literary devices will be identified: simile or metaphor, symbols, allusions, synecdoche, metonymy, personification; sensory imagery (visual, tactile, gustatory, kinesthetic, olfactory, and auditory, including alliteration, assonance, and onomatopoeia); hyperbole, litotes, euphuisms, and aureate terms.

From a study of Emerson's philosophy in writing as seen in his essay, "The Poet," and the Language Section in Emerson's book, Nature, reasons can be found for Emerson's using particular literary devices. An evaluation of the effectiveness of Emerson's usage of literary devices for the word nature will complete the study. The evaluation of effectiveness will be reached (1) by noting from Emerson's own works what he thought was important for a writer to do, (2) by reading what other critics feel Emerson has done, and (3) by seeing if Emerson actually did what he thought was important.

II. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Emerson's concept of nature will be defined in the chapters following. All literary devices will be defined just preceding their usage in the study. This method should

facilitate reading directly through the paper rather than returning to this section of the paper for definitions.

To avoid confusion, Nature underlined represents the book or Emerson's first essay on nature, whereas "Nature" in quotations marks signifies the essay from his Second Series.

CHAPTER II

SENSORY IMAGERY FOR NATURE

Possibly the key to Emerson's sensory imagery can be found in the Beauty section of Nature. After completing the Commodity section, Emerson states that "A nobler want of man is served by nature, namely, the love of Beauty."[1] Emerson develops this idea of nature as beauty in stating:

> To the attentive eye, each moment of the year has its own beauty, and in the same field, it beholds, every hour, a picture which was never seen before, and which shall never be seen again.[2]

Emerson continues to develop his concept of nature as beauty through the use of sensory imagery.

Gustatorily speaking, in "The Poet" Emerson speaks of the bards who "love wine, mead, narcotics, coffee, tea, opium, fumes of sandalwood and tobacco,"[3] but very few (the true poets) receive the "true nectar, which is the ravishment of the intellect by coming nearer to the fact."[4] Emerson continues this imagery by stating that:

> Milton says that the lyric poet may drink wine and live generously, but the epic poet, he who shall sing

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[1] Brooks Atkinson (ed.), Nature in The Selected Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson (New York: The Modern Library, 1950), p. 9.

[2] Ibid., pp. 10-11.

[3] Ibid., "The Poet," p. 332.

[4] Ibid., p. 333.

> of the gods and their descent unto man, must drink water out of a wooden bowl.[1]

Emerson shows that the poet must be very close to nature so that "he should be tipsy with water,"[2] rather than using the artificiality of wine, mead, and narcotics.

Emerson effectively shows beauty in the simplicity of water in a wooden bowl. Only by being close to nature and living in nature can the poet see the true beauty of nature. Here is no gluttonous approach to nature, rather a restrained Epicurean delight in simply drinking water.

One normally cannot find beauty in kinesthetic or motor imagery. Thus, Emerson avoids using very much of this imagery in describing nature. The introductory poem to "The Poet" states:

> A moody child and wildly wise
> Pursued the game with joyful eyes,
> Which chose, like meteors, their way.
> And rived the dark with private ray:
> They overleapt the horizon's edge,
> Searched with Apollo's privilege;
> Through man, and woman, and sea, and star
> Saw the dance of nature forward far.[3]

The overleaping and dancing of nature could be classified as kinesthetic. Emerson also states that "no mountain is of any appreciable height to break the curve of the sphere."[4]

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., p. 319.

[4] Ibid., p. 328.

None of these quotations show true muscular imagery in nature. The solitary illustration found mentioning force is: "an emotion communicates to the intellect the power to sap and upheave Nature."[1] Here the power he mentions is through conversation. Thus one can infer that Emerson visualizes nature as passive rather than active.

Emerson's tactile imagery merges and blends with his visual imagery. Emerson reveals the softness in nature and consistently avoids the harsh, sharp, rough, touch images. Thus he remarks that clouds reveal flakes "of unspeakable softness."[2] Emerson also speaks of the "softness and beauty of the summer clouds floating feathery overhead."[3]

Emerson is also consistent in revealing his concept of nature through the "warm wide fields,"[4] and "the wood-fire to which the chilled traveller rushes for safety."[5] As opposed to the warmth of nature, Emerson shows the coolness of nature in the "cool and disengaged"[6] air, the "shrinking from cold,"[7] and "snow left in cold dells and mountain clefts,"[8] the "deadly cold poles of the earth,"[9] and "the blowing of sleet over a wide sheet of water and over the

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[1] Ibid., p. 335.
[2] Ibid., Nature, p. 10.
[3] Ibid., "Nature," p. 418.
[4] Ibid., p. 406.
[5] Ibid., p. 407.
[6] Ibid., p. 413.
[7] Ibid., p. 415.
[8] Ibid., "Circles," p. 280.
[9] Ibid., "Nature," p. 412.

plains."[1] In every case Emerson shows the coolness of nature from afar. When man comes close to nature, he is warm. The warmth is mellow, genial, agreeable to the senses. Even the cold is not piercing or agonizing, but can be pleasurable and beautiful if seen from a distance.

In "The Divinity School Address" Emerson speaks of having been in the church listening to an uninspiring preacher when he looked out at the snowstorm:

> A snow-storm was falling around us. The snow-storm was real, the preacher merely spectral, and the eye felt the sad contrast in looking at him, and then out of the window behind him into the beautiful meteor of the snow.[2]

The poem, "The Snow-Storm," shows the snow, but Emerson is again on the inside, where it is warm, looking out at the cold:

> Announced by all the trumpets of the sky,
> Arrives the snow, and, driving o'er the fields,
> Seems nowhere to alight: the whited air
> Hides hills and woods, the river, and the heaven,
> And veils the farm-house at the garden's end.
> The sled and traveller stopped, the courier's feet
> Delayed, all friends shut out, the housemates sit
> Around the radiant fireplace, enclosed
> In a tumultuous privacy of a storm.[3]

In both cases Emerson looks at the snow through the window and enjoys its beauty.

Emerson admittedly states that he has no musical ear, but he does use auditory imagery. Certainly his writings on

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[1] Ibid., p. 408.

[2] Ibid., "The Divinity School Address," p. 77.

[3] Ibid., "The Snow-Storm," p. 768.

silence or absence of sound are as audible as loud sounds, for silence, too, can be heard. In Nature he speaks of "the sky with its eternal calm,"[1] the woods with its "eternal calm,"[2] the "silent sea,"[3] the farm's "mute gospel,"[4] and "deaf and dumb nature."[5] In "The Poet" he remarks that "the path of things is silent."[6] In "Nature" one finds the "silent trees,"[7] the "peace of the morning,"[8] and the "sense of stillness."[9] This stillness in nature shows, again, its pleasurable side. The very absence of any mention of the noise of the machines in the industrial world shows that Emerson chose to see only the beauty of passive nature. In this case, nature's soft quietness is beauty.

Emerson speaks of the musical quality in nature, but he does not seem to show the varied music available. He states that architecture is "frozen music,"[10] "air is music,"[11] and there is a "musical order."[12] Several times Emerson tells of the music in the breeze when "the south wind converts all trees to wind-harps."[13]

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[1] Ibid., Nature, p. 15.
[2] Ibid., p. 10.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid., p. 23.
[5] Ibid., p. 25.
[6] Ibid., "The Poet," p. 332.
[7] Ibid., "Nature," p. 419.
[8] Ibid., p. 420.
[9] Ibid., p. 419.
[10] Ibid., Nature, p. 24.
[11] Ibid., "The Poet," p. 322.
[12] Ibid., p. 319.
[13] Ibid., "Nature," p. 408.

> He hears the echoes of a horn in a hill country, in the Notch Mountains, for example, which converts the mountains into an Aeolian harp . . .[1]

Though speaking of music, Emerson limits himself by non-description, and thus he develops poor sound images. He does not, for example, tell if the music is full-toned or muted.

Birds, trees, and river sounds are mentioned, but Emerson does very little to auditorily describe the sounds of nature in onomatopoeic words. He tells of the "songs of wood-birds,"[2] the "foaming brook,"[3] the "notes of birds,"[4] and the "cracking and spurting of hemlock in the flames; or of pine logs."[5] Emerson's best onomatopoeia is as the "pines murmur, the river rolls and shines."[6]

Emerson hears the beauty of nature, but finds no discordant sound. The one example found is Emerson's illustration of Swedenborg as a great translator of nature into thought: The "noise which at a distance appeared like gnashing and thumping, on coming nearer was found to be the voice of disputants."[7] In this case, it was not nature that made the unpleasant sound.

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[1] Ibid., p. 409.
[2] Ibid., "Circles," p. 286.
[3] Ibid., "Nature," p. 411.
[4] Ibid., Nature, p. 36.
[5] Ibid., "Nature," p. 408.
[6] Ibid., Nature, p. 18.
[7] Ibid., "The Poet," p. 337.

Emerson uses very little assonance and alliteration in nature. He does state that "the woods wave . . . the rivers roll"[1] as mentioned before. Repetition of the l and b sounds is found in the "whirling bubble on the surface of a brook."[2] An excellent sibilant sound is developed when he describes himself as "starting at sight of a snake or a sudden noise."[3] This hissing sound aids in showing the snake.

Auditory imagery is effective in showing one aspect of beauty in nature. Emerson limits himself to the soft, sweet, harmonious sounds of nature, and avoids, for the most part, mentioning any loud, shrill, or discordant sound.

Olfactory imagery follows in the same vein as before mentioned in showing the sweet fragrances of nature rather than heavy fumes or the smell of pestilence and decay. Emerson finds an aspect of sweetness in nature as "yesterday breathed perfume,"[4] and moral sentiment "scents the air."[5] Light perfume persists in "the scents and dyes of flowers,"[6] and "heaven's sweetest air."[7] Emerson adds that "the air had so much life and sweetness that it was a pain to come within doors."[8]

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[1] Ibid., Nature, p. 18.

[2] Ibid., "Nature," p. 412.

[3] Ibid., p. 416.

[4] Ibid., Nature, p. 7.

[5] Ibid., p. 24.

[6] Ibid., p. 29.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid., p. 10.

Emerson mentions the open air as good in opposition to the musty air of an enclosed area:

> The use of symbols has a certain power of emancipation and exhilaration for all men. We seem to be touched by a wand which makes us dance and run about happily, like children. We are like persons who come out of a cave or cellar into the open air. This is the effect on us of tropes, fables, oracles and all poetic forms. Poets are thus liberating gods.[1]

No negative odors are used by Emerson. Obviously the sweet fragrances of nature dominate in Emerson's mind, and this is in keeping with his concept of beauty in nature.

Emerson pinpoints visual imagery as

> . . . the plastic power of the human eye, that the primary forms, as the sky, the mountain, the tree, the animal, gives us a delight in and for themselves; a pleasure arising from outline, color, motion, and grouping. This seems partly owing to the eye itself. The eye is the best of artists.[2]

Visual imagery dominates in Emerson's essays, as over one half the sensory images are visual. Within the visual imagery, one finds the beauty of color.

Emerson varies the mundane blueness of the sky by calling it "a blue heaven,"[3] an "azure sky,"[4] and a "blue zenith."[5] Even Carlyle was attracted to this color as he wrote to Emerson: "Your azure-colored Nature gave me true satisfaction."[6]

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[1] Ibid., "The Poet," p. 334.

[2] Ibid., Nature, p. 9.

[3] Ibid., "The Poet," p. 341.

[4] Ibid., Nature, p. 24.

[5] Ibid., "Nature," p. 408.

[6] Frederic Ives Carpenter, Emerson Handbook (New York: Hendricks House, Inc., 1953), p. 53.

Emerson adds contrast to the blue in describing the morning sky as "an aurora of a sunrise,"[1] and a "crimson light."[2] The blue-red spectacle in the sky continues with "spires of flame in the sunset with the blue east for their background."[3] Throughout all this visualization of the sky, Emerson limits himself to the primary colors. This is definitely in keeping with Emerson's desire to stay close to nature, to observe its simplicity, and to establish its basic relationship to life.

Also on the earth, Emerson sees only the beautiful colors. He speaks of the "blue pontederia or pickerelweed blooms in large beds in the shallow parts of our pleasant river, and swarms with yellow butterflies in continual motion."[4] The "purple mountains,"[5] and the "brownest, homeliest common"[6] also add to this beauty of nature. It is interesting to note that Emerson never uses clashing colors. This is consistent with Emerson's view of nature as beauty. Emerson wants to show harmony in nature and compatible colors do just that.

Emerson leans toward the warmer colors of nature. Green, a recognized cool color, is rarely found in his

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[1] Atkinson, op. cit., "The Poet," p. 323.

[2] Ibid., Nature, p. 10.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., p. 11.

[5] Ibid., p. 12.

[6] Ibid., "Nature," p. 410.

writings. Even the blue sky, with its somewhat cooling effect, warms itself with the "pink flakes"[1] of the clouds and the red and orange flaming colors mentioned earlier. Emerson conveys warmth in nature through the "yellow afternoons of October,"[2] the "yellow leaf,"[3] and the "yellow butterflies,"[4] One notes that Emerson does not see the ugly, dark, ominous storm clouds, but rather the pink flakes; that Emerson does not see the dark, rainy October days with the shriveled dead leaves on the tree, but rather the yellow afternoons of October with the yellow leaf.

Emerson clarifies the importance of warmth in stating:

> A little heat, that is a little motion, is all that differences the bald dazzling white and deadly cold poles of the earth from the prolific tropical climates.[5]

Possibly, Emerson is also saying in the above quotation that he sees even opposites as near-harmonious.

Emerson is consistent in showing nature as colorful and pleasing to the eye. Nature is warm and natural in its colors. Even in Emerson's painting of nature, one does not see artificiality. Nature becomes a "painted element"[6] when Emerson and his friend leave

> . . . the world of villages and personalities behind and pass into a delicate realm of sunset and moonlight too

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[1] Ibid., Nature, p. 10. [2] Ibid., p. 11.

[3] Ibid., "The Poet," p. 323. [4] Ibid., Nature, p. 11.

[5] Ibid., "Nature," p. 412. [6] Ibid., p. 408.

> bright almost for spotted man to enter without novitiate and probation.[1]

"Painted" may imply unnaturalness, but Emerson states that he and his friend "penetrate bodily this incredible beauty."[2] To further clarify, Emerson contrasts the beauties of nature with the "ugliness of towns and palaces."[3]

In "The Poet" Emerson explains that

> As, in the sun, objects paint their images on the retina of the eye, so they, sharing the aspiration of the whole universe, tend to paint a far more delicate copy of their essence in his mind.[4]

The painting thus becomes a natural visual image.

In his Journal entry of February, 1844, Emerson states that the "snowbanks were sprinkled with tobacco juice."[5] The September, 1850, entry tells that Wallis's Pond is "covered like sugar-baker's molasses."[6] Both of these descriptions show brown on white, but give distinctively different connotations. Tobacco juice gives a negative connotation, which is exactly what Emerson wants to do to show dualism. Emerson was an unhappy dualist at this point in his writing, as he could not unify mind and matter.

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., "The Poet," p. 331.

[5] Stephen E. Whicher (ed.), Selections from Ralph Waldo Emerson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1960), p. 275.

[6] Ibid., p. 323.

Although he would like to see nature only philosophically and spiritually, he cannot come to the belief that there is no physical world. As a dualist, Emerson sees both the physical and spiritual. There can be beauty in the snowbank, but it is spoiled physically by the tobacco juice stain.

Emerson uses the molasses coloring for the pond to give a good connotation. Emerson was enjoying nature as he paddled across the pond and then swam in the water that September day.

At this point it seems worthwhile to note that in his journals, Emerson accumulated in the course of years a store of observations, reflections, and perceptions. The journal entries revealed in this paper show some truly concrete and "good" images. From his journal, Emerson developed his lectures, and from the lectures he developed his essays. During this process of rewriting and polishing, Emerson seems to have lost the vividness in sensory images that was originally found in his journals. Possibly Emerson became too far removed from nature when he wrote his essays. Emerson's published essays have lost the vivid concreteness of his observations of nature as he truly saw and recorded them in his journals, thus his essays result in general and oftentimes meaningless sensory images.

For example, one of Emerson's best observations can be found in his March 27, 1838, Journal recording:

> But go into the forest, you shall find all new and undescribed. The honking of the wild geese flying by night; the thin note of the companionable titmouse in the winter day; the fall of swarms of flies, in autumn, from combats high in the air, pattering down on the leaves like rain; the angry hiss of the wood-birds; the pine throwing out its pollen for the benefit of the next century; the turpentine exuding from the tree; --and indeed any vegetation, and animation, any and all, are alike unattempted.[1]

This quotation was used in Emerson's Dartmouth Address on "Literary Ethics," and it vividly shows nature as man may see it. On May eleventh of the same year, Emerson mentions that the "frogs pipe; waters far off tinkle; dry leaves hiss; grass bends and rustles."[2] Never in his essays does Emerson achieve the same excellent auditory images and closeness with nature as he does in the two journal entries quoted above.

In his essay, Nature, Emerson does not just turn to the forest and perceive nature at that one particular place as was seen in his journals. Rather, he seems to prefer the more panoramic and thus, more general, observation of nature as:

> The shows of day, the dewy morning, the rainbow, mountains, orchards in blossom, star, moonlight, shadows in still water . . .[3]

Emerson is apart from nature as he even suggests in his essay, Nature, that the vegetables are nodding acquaintances, not real friends:

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[1] Ibid., p. 86.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Atkinson, op. cit., Nature, p. 11.

> The greatest delight which the fields and woods minister is the suggestion of an occult relation between man and the vegetable. I am not alone and unacknowledged. They nod to me, and I to them. The waving of the boughs in the storm is new to me and old. It takes me by surprise, and yet is not unknown.[1]

Later, in his Journal entry of January 31, 1841, Emerson speaks of a closeness to the forest:

> All my thoughts are foresters. I have scarce a day-dream on which the breath of the pines has not blown, and their shadows waved. Shall I not then call my little book Forest Essays.?[2]

Yet, in "Nature," Second Series, his proposed "Forest Essays," no vivid, concrete observation of nature in the forest is found. Nothing can be found in his essays of his own close observations, yet he has recorded in his Journal:

> Last night the moon rose behind four distinct pine-tree tops in the distant woods and the night at ten was so bright that I walked abroad . . . Nature grows over me. Frogs pipe, waters far off tinkle; dry leaves hiss; grass bends and rustles, and I have died out of the human world and come to feel a strange, cold, aqueous, terraqueous, aerial, ethereal sympathy and existence. I sow the sun and moon for seeds.[3]

These journal entries show that Emerson could become close to nature, could perceive nature through his senses, and could even record his feelings on paper. Unfortunately, these vivid journal entries were not duplicated in his essays. Instead, general and oftentimes meaningless sensory images are found in his essays.

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[1] Ibid., p. 7.

[2] Whicher, op. cit., p. 146.

[3] Ibid., p. 88.

Emerson extends the beauty in nature without the help of color. Again, Emerson looks toward the sky to find "the spectacle of morning from the hilltop."[1] Emerson seems not to look to the ground where there are possible discordant features of nature, but he limits himself to that which is pleasing and beautiful to him. Clouds, stars, the sky, and the sun reappear time and time again as Emerson looks at nature.[2]

Emerson does not concentrate or localize his vision; he does not attempt to paint a vivid picture realistically showing the all of nature visually. Rather, Emerson looks at the earth and sky as panoramic without detailed description. Possibly one can catch a glimpse of his panoramic view without details as he tells of the problem:

> It is an odd jealousy, but the poet finds himself not near enough to his object. The pine-tree, the river, the bank of flowers before him does not seem to be nature.[3]

Rather than seeing specific things in nature, Emerson turns to "the sea, the mountain-ridge, Niagara, and every flower-bed,"[4] to show that they super-exist in pre-cantations. To show an epic song, he misses the beauty and rhythm of the minute: the little wild rose as it first is, is but a touch

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[1] Atkinson, op. cit., Nature, p. 10.

[2] See above pages 12, 13, and 14.

[3] Ibid., "Nature," p. 419.

[4] Ibid., "The Poet," p. 331.

of pink on a green stem and then develops into full bloom, showing each of its velvet petals and its golden center or the symmetry of the delicate lacework on the fern leaf along the wooded path in the woods. Instead, he turns to the uninspirational work of the farmer, as to Emerson "a summer, with its harvest sown, reaped and stored, is an epic song."[1]

Emerson takes a wide view of nature in showing it as ever-changing. He even avoids using specific names of plants, birds, and insects:

> The succession of native plants in the pastures and roadsides, which make the silent clock by which time tells the summer hours, will make even the divisions of the day sensible to a keen observer. The tribes of birds and insects, like the plants punctual to their time, follow each other, and the year has room for all.[2]

Emerson does attempt to describe water vividly rather than to just mention it generally. Water presents itself as "a foaming brook,"[3] the "whirling bubbles on the surface of a brook,"[4] and the "drops of all the sea."[5] Emerson depicts the whirling bubbles and foaming brook vividly, but on another occasion he sees only the "reflections of trees and flowers in glassy lakes."[6] He chooses not to specify the types of trees or flowers or to describe them in any detail. Emerson is, again, only seeing the over-all view of the beauty of nature.

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid., Nature, p. 11.

[3] Ibid., "Nature," p. 411.

[4] Ibid., p. 412.

[5] Ibid., "The Poet," p. 339.

[6] Ibid., "Nature," p. 408.

Emerson continues his theory of nature as beauty in listing the parts of nature: "the earnest of the north wind, or rain, of stone and wood";[1] "the sun, and moon, the animals, the water and stones";[2] "the chaff and the wheat, weeds and plants, blight, rain, insects, sun";[3] "every dry knoll of sure grass, from every pine, stump and half-imbedded stone on which the dull March sun shines";[4] and the "shows of day, the dewy morning, the rainbow, the mountains, orchards in blossom, stars, moonlight, shadows in still water."[5] Emerson does not try to paint a vivid picture of nature, but he tries to show that all of nature, at any time, any place, anything, can be an object of beauty. Or, as Emerson states:

> Wherever snows fall, or water flows or birds fly, wherever day and night meet in twilight, wherever the blue heaven is hung by clouds or sown with stars . . . there is Beauty, plenteous as rain shed for thee.[6]

Emerson's theory that there is "unity in variety" is certainly developed here as he states: "there is no fact in nature which does not carry the whole sense of nature."[7] He states that the entire system of things is represented in every particle. Thus the whole of nature is synonymous with individual aspects of nature. Or as Emerson states in his

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[1] Ibid., "The Poet," p. 326. [2] Ibid., p. 333.

[3] Ibid., Nature, p. 23. [4] Ibid., "The Poet," p. 333.

[5] Ibid. [6] Ibid., Nature, p. 11.

[7] Ibid., "The Poet," p. 341.

poem, "Each and All":

> . . . All are needed by each one;
> Nothing is fair or good alone.
> I thought the sparrow's note from heaven,
> Singing at dawn on the alder bough;
> I brought him home, in his nest, at even;
> He sings the song, but it cheers not now,
> For I did not bring home the river and sky--
> He sang to my ear,--they sang to my eye . . .[1]

This each and all theory, that no fact is in nature that does not carry the whole of nature, is also developed in "The Poet" and in Nature.

Emerson states that all of nature is beauty, yet he ignores the naturalistic side of nature in his examples and discussion. He seems satisfied with the Keatsean view expressed in "Ode on a Grecian Urn:"

> Beauty is truth, truth beauty--that is all Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

Emerson uses the cataloging technique shown in listing parts of nature to carry out his theory that in nature "all the individual forms are agreeable to the eye, as is proved by our endless imitations of some of them."[2] These endless imitations are:

> . . . the acorn, the grape, the pine-cone, the wheat-ear, the egg, the wings and forms of most birds, the lion's claw, the serpent, the butterfly, sea-shells, flames, clouds, buds, leaves, and the forms of many trees, as the palm.[3]

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[1] Whicher, op. cit., "Each and All," p. 413.

[2] Atkinson, op. cit., Nature, p. 9.

[3] Ibid.

Since Emerson states that nature is beauty and "nature satisfies by its loveliness,"[1] he seems consistent to his views of the beautiful nature. Throughout his visual description, Emerson keeps in mind that "There is no object so foul that intense light will not make beautiful."[2] Emerson carries this point to the extreme in saying: I see the spectacle of morning from the hilltop . . . from day break to sunrise with emotions an angel might share."[3] Seemingly, Emerson is effective in his selection of sensory imagery to convey his concept of the beauty of nature. What Emerson tends to forget is the ugly side of nature.

One must agree with critics who say that Emerson "views nature all too blandly through the eyes of the mind."[4] Matthiessen states that Emerson has "almost exclusive absorption with seeing . . . all senses except the eye are slighted."[5] Matthiessen also thinks that Emerson has "musical eyes,"[6] rather than musical ears. Another criticism mentioned earlier was that Emerson sees only loveliness in nature.

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[1] Ibid., p. 10.

[2] Ibid., p. 9.

[3] Ibid., p. 10.

[4] F. O. Matthiessen, American Renaissance (London: Oxford University Press, 1949), p. 160.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

Emerson wants to "walk upon the ground, but not sink."[1] Thoreau is more earthbound:

> Now your feet expand on a smooth sandy bottom, now contract timidly on pebbles, now slump in genial fatty mud, amid the pads.[2]

Thus, Thoreau's concreteness in his presentation of sensory experience far outweighs Emerson's attempts. Thoreau stands under the tree and feels the rain; Emerson seems to see the tree as an abstraction or generalization. Or, as Alcott states, Emerson is "forbidden pure companionship with Nature because he dwelt rather in an intellectual grove."[3]

Matthiessen, Beach, and Alcott criticize Emerson quite harshly.[4] Undoubtedly, Emerson lacks vividness and specificity. One does feel that Emerson makes no distinction between the word and the visual image. He feels that it is sufficient to just name the parts of nature, without describing in detail its component parts. But, Emerson does use sensory imagery effectively in showing his concept of nature. Nature, to Emerson, is beauty, warmth, and goodness. Emerson fails, however, to see all of nature. In his romantic, idealistic way, Emerson limits himself to only that part of nature which is agreeable to him.

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[1] Ibid., p. 158.

[2] Ibid., p. 165.

[3] Ibid., p. 160.

[4] See, for example, F. O. Matthiessen, American Renaissance, p. 160 and Charles Feidelson, Jr., Symbolism and American Literature (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), p. 298.

CHAPTER III

PERSONIFICATION OF NATURE

Emerson's use of personification seems to dominate Nature and "Nature." In both essays on nature and in his other writings, Emerson treats nature as the age-old Mother. Emerson refers to nature throughout his writings in the feminine gender: "Nature herself,"[1] "her works,"[2] "her laws,"[3] "her secret."[4]

Many characteristics of Mother Nature are developed by Emerson, but one dominant trait is the warm protectiveness. Emerson shows feelings of tenderness toward Mother Nature by speaking of "my beautiful mother,"[5] and "my gentle nest."[6] Nature, in turn, "stretches out her arms to embrace man,"[7] she "follows his steps with the rose and the violet, and bends her line of grandeur and grace to the decoration of her darling child."[8] "She stands with bended head, and hands folded upon the breast."[9] Man is "embosomed for a season in nature."[10] All four of the above quotations show

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[1] Atkinson, op. cit., Nature, p. 28.

[2] Ibid., "Nature," p. 412.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., p. 419.

[5] Ibid., Nature, p. 33.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid., p. 12.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid., p. 34.

[10] Ibid., p. 3.

nature as mother of man, guiding and protecting him during his lifetime. Man is, by implication, a child of nature. This is important to note, as Emerson wants man to understand that nature will teach, guide, and protect him, if he will but turn to nature. Again, a child's first teacher is his mother.

Emerson furthers this mother image in "Nature" by writing of "Nature's throbbing breast."[1] He states that "Nature will indulge her offspring,"[2] yet man would "nestle in nature."[3] Here Emerson best describes the protective mother as man nestles in nature and finds comfort and tenderness at Mother Nature's breast.

The softness of Mother Nature is repeated through the stars. Stars reveal themselves "with their admonishing smiles"[4] and their "beguiling . . . soft glances."[5] The most beautifully stated personification of the stars is the following:

> The stars at night stoop down over the brownest, homeliest common with all the spiritual magnificance which they shed on the Campagna, or on the marble deserts of Egypt.[6]

Mother Nature is a teacher and guide to mankind. In "Fate" Emerson sees the cruel hand of nature: the earthquake,

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[1] Ibid., "Nature," p. 406. [2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., p. 407. [4] Ibid., Nature, p. 5.

[5] Ibid., "Nature," p. 409. [6] Ibid., p. 410.

the flood, and the storm. He does not seem to personify the harsh elements of nature, but calls them the "irresistible dictation"[1] and later the "Beautiful Necessity."[2] Since a cruel nature is contrary to Emerson's view, in "Fate" Emerson states that the so-called bad in nature oftentimes can be made good:

> The water drowns ship and sailor like a grain of dust. But learn to swim, trim your bark, and the wave which drowned it will be cloven by it and carry it like its own foam, a plume and a power.[3]

And Emerson concludes this essay by saying:

> Why should we be afraid of Nature, which is no other than "philosophy and theology embodied"? Why should we fear to be crushed by savage elements, we who are made up of the same elements? Let us build to the Beautiful Necessity, which makes man brave in believing that he cannot shun a danger that is appointed, nor incur one that is not; to the Necessity which rudely or softly educates him to the perception that there are no contingencies . . .[4]

Man, due to his power or intellect, may be able to win over fate or circumstance, but man cannot completely control nature. Much progress has been made in medicine, space, and all fields of science, but man still cannot conquer the hurricanes or the snow-storms. Emerson feels that this struggle of man's power or intellect against circumstance and nature is what has made man great and will continue to

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[1] Whicher, op. cit., "Fate," p. 330.

[2] Ibid., p. 352.

[3] Ibid., p. 344.

[4] Ibid., p. 352.

make man great. He also feels that man can be free enough to be great, as fate and power can live together compatibly. Thus Emerson, at the beginning of "Fate," calls nature the irresistable dictation, yet at the end he could call fate or nature the "Beautiful Necessity." Therefore, even the harsh elements of nature can be made good and instructive for man. An implied personification is found throughout "Fate": as a mother disciplines her child so he may learn, so Mother Nature disciplines her child (all mankind) so he may gain in wisdom.

In her protectiveness and her teaching, Mother Nature can become persuasive, as she will "preach."[1] The poet "is commanded in nature by the living power which he feels to be there present."[2] "Nature offers all her creatures to him [the poet] as a picture-language."[3] "The incommunicable trees begin to persuade us to live with them, and quit our life of solemn trifles."[4] Mother Nature seems to be quite persuasive in her preaching, commanding, and persuading in the above quotations.

Tied closely to the preceding characteristic is self-sufficiency as a trait of Mother Nature:

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[1] Atkinson, op. cit., Nature, p. 23.

[2] Ibid., "The Poet," p. 326.

[3] Ibid., p. 325.

[4] Ibid., "Nature," p. 407.

> Nature is always consistent, though she feigns to contravene her own laws. She keeps her laws, and seems to transcend them. She arms and equips an animal to find its place and living in the earth, and at the same time she arms and equips another animal to destroy it. Space exists to divide creatures; but by clothing the sides of a bird with a few feathers she gives him a petty omnipresence.[1]

Emerson reiterates this self-sufficiency in Mother Nature by saying: "Nature does all things by her own hands, and does not leave another to baptize her but baptizes herself."[2] Further examples are found, as:

> Nature, through all her kingdoms, insures herself. Nobody cares for planting the poor fungus; so she shakes down from the gills of one agaric countless spores, any one of which, being preserved, transmits new billions of spores to-morrow or next day.[3]

Even though Mother Nature may seem quite independent, man is needed by nature as nature is needed by man:

> Nature is loved by what is best in us. It is loved as the city of God, although, or rather because there is no citizen. The sunset is unlike anything that is underneath it: it wants men. And the beauty of nature must always seem unreal and mocking, until the landscape has human figures that are as good as itself.[4]

The sky "gives us a delight,"[5] and "the sun and moon come each and look."[6] Emerson seems to want to show that all parts of Mother Nature wish to join mankind.

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[1] Ibid., pp. 412-413.

[2] Ibid., "The Poet," p. 330.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., "Nature," p. 411.

[5] Ibid., Nature, p. 9.

[6] Ibid., p. 12.

The sweet and lovely femininity of Mother Nature is best shown in Emerson's personification of the air. The "air is a cordial of incredible virtue,"[1] and "yesterday breathed perfume."[2] Through the aromatized liqueur and the perfume, Emerson shows Mother Nature as quite feminine.

These feminine characteristics are continued in the dress of Mother Nature. Emerson writes that nature is never "tricked into holiday attire."[3] Nature wears the "striped coat of climates,"[4] rather than the holiday attire. Thus, Mother Nature wears colorful clothing of the seasons.

Even though Emerson feels the need for closeness to nature, he is too sophisticated to see Mother Nature nude. He even mentions that "Nature cannot be surprised in undress."[5] He seems to ignore the undressed winter season.

To explain the unity in variety theory in more detail, Emerson uses personification in stating:

> Each creature is only a modification of the other; the likeness in them is more than the difference, and their radical law is one and the same. A rule of one art, or a law of one organization, holds true throughout nature. So intimate is this Unity that, it is easily seen, it lies under the undermost garment of Nature.[6]

This idea of unity as under the "undermost garment of Nature"[7] not only shows personification, but aids one in

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[1] Ibid., p. 6.
[2] Ibid., p. 7.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid., p. 8.
[5] Ibid., "Nature," p. 410.
[6] Ibid., Nature, pp. 24-25.
[7] Ibid., p. 25.

seeing how close all things in nature are to Emerson. Again, Emerson is too refined to use base words or mention nudity in nature.

By using personification, Emerson intensifies his view that man lives through nature: men draw their "living as parasites from her roots and grains, and we receive glances from the heavenly bodies."[1]

Emerson shows Mother Nature as beautiful and gentle through her flowers and plants. The flowers are personified as expressing "to us the delicate affections."[2] Flowers "jilt us,"[3] and "reflect wisdom."[4] Vegetables "nod to me."[5] "Plants . . . are vessels of health and vigor, but they grope ever upward."[6] In personifying the plant, Emerson is able to explain nature as a "system in transition."[7] "Plants are the young of the world . . . the trees are imperfect men."[8] In the above quotation Emerson varies from the sterotype. Emerson continues to show the beautiful and gentle side of nature in the flowers as he did in the over-all Mother Nature image.

It is important to note that the flowers are full of health and vigor, but the weeds present themselves as "frail

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[1] Ibid., "Nature," p. 407.
[2] Ibid., Nature, p. 15.
[3] Ibid., "Nature," p. 413.
[4] Ibid., Nature, p. 5.
[5] Ibid., p. 7.
[6] Ibid., "Nature," p. 413.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.

and weary."[1] To most of mankind, the pestilent weed has proven a hardy plant even without cultivation or care. But since the weed is unsightly, Emerson would prefer to see the weed as frail and weary.

Trees "bemoan their imprisonment rooted in the ground."[2] The "maples and ferns are still uncorrupt,"[3] yet "they too will curse and swear, when they come to consciousness."[4] Here Emerson shows the trees as a part of Mother Nature's "system in transition"[5] discussed on the previous page. Emerson also personifies the trees by showing them as beautiful: The New World even clothes "his form with her palm groves and savannahs as fit drapery."[6]

Mother Nature is religious and is personified as such:

> All things are moral; and in their boundless changes have an unceasing reference to spiritual nature. Therefore is nature glorious with form, color, and motion; that every globe in the remotest heaven . . . every change of vegetation from the first principle of growth in the eye of a leaf, to the tropical function from the sponge up to Hercules, shall hint or thunder to man the laws of right and wrong, and echo the Ten Commandments. Therefore is Nature ever the ally of Religion: lends all her pomp and riches to the religious sentiment. Prophet and priest, David, Isaiah, Jesus, have drawn deeply from this source. This ethical character so penetrates the bone and marrow of nature, as to seem the end for which it was made.[7]

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[1] Ibid., Nature, p. 32.

[2] Ibid., "Nature," p. 413.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid., Nature, p. 12.

[7] Ibid., p. 23.

Emerson shows the close alignment of nature with religion and ethics by personifying nature and telling that the very "bone and marrow of nature"[1] is filled with this ethical character. This idea is re-emphasized by Emerson's statement that "The visible heavens and earth sympathize with Jesus."[2]

Just as Emerson uses personification to show the closeness of religion and nature, so he uses the same technique to show the closeness of poetry and nature. In "The Poet" he states this close harmony:

> The sublime vision comes to the pure and simple soul in a clean and chaste body [nature].[3]

With nature in close harmony with Emerson, he can easily treat it on an equal basis. Using personification aids in this endeavor. Emerson effectively uses the literary device of personification to show a close harmony with nature, and to aid in showing the beauty of nature as a whole and as a unit. Emerson's close kinship to nature can be summarized by his statement: "But marry it [nature] to human history, and it is full of life."[4]

As Emerson saw only the beauty, warmth, and goodness through sensory devices as noted in Chapter II, he again saw the same qualities in Mother Nature through personification.

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid., p. 12.

[3] Ibid., "The Poet," p. 333.

[4] Ibid., Nature, p. 10.

For example, nature remains warm, tender, and gentle in Emerson's personification of her, just as he uses warm colors in visual sensory images and shows softness in nature through tactile imagery.

Emerson's flaw, then, seems to be his ever-constant problem of not seeing the negative side of nature. His one admission of the negativeness of nature in "Fate" actually becomes positive as without this Beautiful Necessity in nature, man could not become great. Emerson points out his weakness in saying:

> I have no hostility to nature, but a child's love to it. I expand and live in the warm day like corn and melons. Let us speak her fair. I do not wish to fling stones at my beautiful mother, nor soil my gentle nest. I only wish to indicate the true position of nature in regard to men . . .[1]

In the above quotation Emerson even ignores one of the natural, but distasteful, functions: that of soiling the nest. Emerson's "true position" seems very idealistic in regard to nature and man.

Even though Emerson does have this idealism toward nature, his usage of personification is effective in showing nature as he conceives it. In characterizing Mother Nature, he does not limit himself to beauty, gentleness and goodness mentioned above. He shows the qualities of tenderness, protectiveness, persuasiveness, self-sufficiency, guidance

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[1] Ibid., p. 33.

and instruction. Mother Nature is healthy, religious, and well-clothed. Most importantly, Mother Nature is shown in close harmony with man and poetry.

One can visualize Emerson's nature more clearly because of his use of personification. This use strengthens his theory that man must be in harmony with nature to be in touch with the Oversoul, to know the true laws, thus to become the poet, the free man. As "Nature stretches out her arms to embrace man,"[1] one can visualize the motherly qualities of protection, love, and guidance which are very much a part of Emerson's nature.

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[1] Ibid., p. 10.

CHAPTER IV

SYMBOLS, METAPHORS, AND SIMILES

Since Emerson states that "nature is a symbol"[1] and language, the vehicle for concrete facts, is also a symbol, one could say that all Emerson states about nature is symbolic. The statement, "Every natural fact is a symbol of some spiritual fact,"[2] develops his theory of correspondence. Every physical or natural law corresponds with a moral law, thus material objects of nature are symbols of truth. Allen even states that the "Transcendentalist worships the symbol" and man is a genius because of his control of the symbol.[3]

Countless additional references substantiate the importance Emerson places on the symbol. As he so aptly states:

> Things admit of being used as symbols because nature is a symbol, in the whole, and in every part.[4]

Emerson even projects a world in which only symbols exist:

> We are symbols and inhabit symbols; workmen, work, and tools, words and things, birth and death, all are emblems; but we sympathize with the symbols, and being

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[1] Ibid., "The Poet," p. 325. [2] Ibid., Nature, p. 15.

[3] Gay Wilson Allen, American Prosody, (New York: American Book Company, 1935), p. 93.

[4] Atkinson, op. cit., "The Poet," p. 325.

> infatuated with the economical uses of things, we do not know that they are thoughts. The poet, by an ulterior intellectual perception, gives them a power which makes their old use forgotten, and puts eyes and a tongue into every dumb and inanimate object.[1]

To symbolize is man's function, but to symbolize is to become a symbol. Emerson explains that all men are aware of symbols but men have limitations. Emerson contends that all true speech is poetic creation, and all men are potential poets. They could use symbols effectively, but with one cardinal exception: their inability to express what they experience. The poet, therefore, is man's mouthpiece through which he expresses and reveals himself.

Feidelson states that the "value of a trope is that the hearer is one; and indeed Nature itself is a vast trope, and all particular natures are tropes."[2] In other words, Feidelson agrees that nature is a symbol also.

What must the poet do to be effective? The poet must be in close harmony with nature. He "must drink water out of a wooden bowl."[3] He must return to the simple life so even water should make the poet tipsy. In short, "The poet's habit of living should be set on a key so low that the common influences should delight him."[4] Then, the post must transform those experiences onto the written page by

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[1] Ibid., p. 328.

[2] Feidelson, op. cit., p. 145.

[3] Atkinson, op. cit., "The Poet," p. 333.

[4] Ibid.

use of symbols. Emerson even specifies that "Small and mean things serve as well as great symbols."[1]

Allen states that Emerson believes that poetry is mystical; that it comes into being as a result of inspiration. In that moment the poet sees the very essence of things. The poet makes the unseen visible by means of language. But he is not here a conscious creator. "Vision, also, shows him the symbols and the thought takes its own form in language that is rhythmical."[2] Because of this, there is a certain indwelling beauty in poetry and Emerson measures its greatness by its cosmical quality. In such a theory, poetry is spiritual and forms a link between the visible and invisible world.[3]

Through the previous statements, one would assume that Emerson makes much use of the symbol. This assumption is warranted as he calls nature the "symbol of spirit,"[4] and states that "Every rational creature has all nature for his dowry and estate."[5] He also states that the farmer, hunter and sailor learn "that Nature's dice are always

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Jean Gorely, "Emerson's Theory of Poetry," Poetry Review (July-August, 1931) XXII, pp. 272-273, citing Gay Wilson Allen, American Prosody, p. 92.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Atkinson, op. cit., Nature, p. 14.

[5] Ibid., p. 11.

loaded."[1] Here are three widely varying symbols of nature. Emerson declares that nature is a symbol of spirit as "every object rightly seen, unlocks a new faculty of the soul."[2] As a dowry and estate, nature becomes a prized possession of mankind. But, as loaded dice, Emerson shows that nature may have the cards stacked either for or against mankind. Thus, nature has many faces and characteristics.

Just as personification was used as shown in Chapter III to show a religious nature, symbols are used to further this idea. It is evident that the Divine Being is constantly present in Nature, owing to Nature's imminent goodness and awesome simplicity. Emerson believes that "within the form of every creature is a force impelling it to ascend to a higher form."[3] It would seem that this "force" is the goodness, thus "Godness," in man and the lower forms. Emerson contends that "Nature is loved by what is best in us. It is loved as the city of God."[4] Nature is shown as "an appendix to the soul"[5] which again shows the close relationship of nature and religion and mankind. In a simile, Nature is characterized like Jesus:

> The aspect of Nature is devout. Like the figure of Jesus, she stands with bended head and hands folded upon the breast. The happiest man is he who learns from nature the lesson of worship.[6]

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[1] Ibid., p. 22.

[2] Ibid., p. 20.

[3] Ibid., "The Poet," p. 329.

[4] Ibid., "Nature," p. 411.

[5] Ibid., Nature, p. 31.

[6] Ibid., p. 34.

Through additional comparison, man continues to be shown in close relationship with nature and religion:

> As a plant upon the earth, so a man rests upon the bosom of God: he is nourished by unfailing fountains, and draws at his need inexhaustible power.[1]

Although Emerson uses numerous biblical symbols for nature, he is not unique in his word usage, but uses those symbols that were used by writers before him.

Emerson professes Swedenborg as the man of his time who "stands eminently for the translator of nature into thought."[2] Hubbell contends that the organic theory came about through Coleridge and Schlegal.[3] No doubt each contributed to the organic theory, and Emerson enlarged upon it.

The organic theory is most important to Emerson. Simply stated, the organic metaphor is one that is not deliberately contrived, but rather grows out of nature and comes from inspiration. The metaphor becomes a concrete image from man's observing nature, and the metaphor is used to communicate an abstract idea. The fluxional or fluid symbol or metaphor can be concrete, but it need not be limited in what it can express.

In "The Poet" Emerson develops the organic symbol and/or metaphor in detail. Emerson compares it to the

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[1] Ibid., p. 35.

[2] Ibid., "The Poet," p. 337.

[3] Jay B. Hubbell, Floyd Stovall, et. al., Eight American Authors (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1956), p. 89.

mystic's writing. The mystic is one who allegorizes, moralizes, but freezes symbols. The mystic "nails a symbol to one sense, which was a true sense for a moment, but soon becomes old and false."[1] Emerson furthers this discussion by saying:

> For all symbols are fluxional, all language is vehicular and transitive, and is good, as ferries and horses are, for conveyance, not as farms and houses are, for homestead.[2]

He also contends:

> But the quality of the imagination is to flow, and not to freeze. The poet did not stop at the color or the form, but read their meaning; neither may he rest in this meaning, but he makes the same objects exponents of his new thought.[3]

Emerson feels that the symbol or metaphor should not be intentionally contrived, but should rise from nature. If it rises from nature, an emanation of the Oversoul, it is organic.

Emerson uses water imagery to carry out the idea of the fluxional symbol. He speaks of the "fountains of the deep"[4] and the "floods of life [that] stream around and through us."[5] Certainly the second image depicts a strong movement.

The river is represented as "a perpetual gala and [it] boasts each month a new ornament."[6] Emerson places man

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[1] Atkinson, op. cit., "The Poet," p. 336.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., Nature, p. 31.

[5] Ibid., p. 3.

[6] Ibid., p. 11.

"on the brink of the water of life and truth."[1]

> Nature is a sea of forms radically alike and even unique. A leaf, a sunbeam, a landscape, the ocean, make an analogous impression on the mind.[2]

This sea of forms, metaphorically speaking, shows not so much a water image as a constant flow of beauty as seen throughout nature. Emerson reiterates this idea by saying: "Its light (nature) flows into the mind evermore."[3]

Figures of speech concerning the air add to the flowing imagery, as:

> The long slender bars of clouds float like fishes in the sea of crimson light.[4]

In the above quotation Emerson shows not only this flowing image of nature, but the beauty of nature. Beauty and the fluxional symbol are seen in the sentence: "Ever does natural beauty (nature) steal in like air and envelop great actions."[5] Here again, Emerson shows how nature is in movement, just as air is constantly moving.

As Emerson declares the philosophy of flux and mobility in nature, his work is permeated with images of flowing. Even the solid earth becomes a "green ball which floats him (man) through the heavens."[6] "Nothing solid is left secure since all matter has been infiltrated and dis-

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[1] Ibid., "The Poet," p. 336. [2] Ibid., Nature, p. 13.
[3] Ibid., p. 17. [4] Ibid., p. 10.
[5] Ibid., p. 12. [6] Ibid., p. 7.

solved by thought."[1] By using this flowing imagery, Emerson shows another characteristic of nature. Nature is constantly changing, transitional, and new:

> In nature every moment is new; the past is always swallowed and forgotten; the coming only is sacred. Nothing is secure but life, transition, the energizing spirit.[2]

Nature's system in transition, discussed in Chapter III, is shown again in symbolism:

> For through that better perception he [the poet] stands one step nearer to things, and sees the flowing or metamorphosis; perceives that thought is multiform; that within the form of every creature is a force impelling it to ascend into a higher form; and following with his eyes the life, uses the forms which express that life, and so his speech flows with the flowing of nature. All the facts of the animal economy, sex, nutriment, gestation, birth, growth, are symbols of the passage of the world into the soul of man to suffer there a change and reappear a new and higher fact.[3]

Emerson then tells that "The poet alone knows why the plain and meadow of space was strown with these flowers we call suns and moons and stars."[4] Here Emerson takes the earth and flowers and places them in the heavens. He ends this symbolism by saying that "in every word he [the poet] speaks, he rides on them as the horses of thought."[5] Here the poet as a writer not only sees nature, but he has

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[1] Matthiessen, op. cit., p. 70.

[2] Atkinson, op. cit., "Circles," p. 289.

[3] Ibid., "The Poet," p. 329.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

command over nature in his writing as a rider has command over his horse. This is, again, a fluxional symbol. The poet's "speech flows with the flowing of nature."[1]

Feidelson contends that poetic vision is the perception of the symbolic character of things, and Emerson does not

> . . . exploit the most exciting quality of modern symbolism in the tension between opposite meanings in paradox and the tension between logical paradox and its literary resolution.[2]

Emerson attempts to effectively implement the organic symbol and metaphor as he presented it in Nature and "The Poet." He may not follow the "exciting quality of modern symbolism"[3] that Feidelson discusses, but Emerson does follow the advice he gives the poets to use organic symbols that are fluxional. Emerson's problem is that his metaphors are intentionally contrived.

Matthiessen discusses Emerson's recurring usage of one symbol in both his poetry and prose. The tiny sea-shell is used quite often and seems to have particular significance to Emerson. Matthiessen continues:

> What the shell symbolized to him [Emerson] can represent his problem as a poet. He had perception of a most delicate and poignant beauty, he was continually being flooded by the fullness of the moment. But when he came to set it down on paper, the rhythmical wholeness of the experience slipped away from him, and the

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Hubbell, op. cit., p. 91.

[3] Ibid.

> residue seemed to turn to lifeless gray. He could manage only seldom to build an organic form of his own.[1]

Chapter II discusses Emerson's problem that Matthiessen brings forward in the above quotation. Emerson does have difficulty setting down on paper what he actually feels. Certainly Emerson makes attempts at using the organic theory in his own writing. As Emerson states:

> Nature is not fixed but fluid. Spirit alters, moulds, makes it. The immobility or bruteness of nature is the absence of spirit; to pure spirit it is fluid, it is volatile, it is obedient. Every spirit builds itself a house, and beyond its house a world, and beyond its world a heaven.[2]

However, Henry David Thoreau speaks of the organic style as being a slow growth, unfolding under the care of the poet's patient hands. In Walden Thoreau shows spring with flowing imagery and with the organic principle in use:

> The brooks sing carols and glee to the spring. The marsh hawk, sailing low over the meadow, is already seeking the first slimy life that awakes. The sinking sound of melting snow is heard in all dells, and the ice dissolves apace in the ponds. The grass flames up on the hillsides like a spring fire . . . as if the earth sent forth an inward heat to greet the returning sun; no yellow but green is the color of its flame;--the symbol of perpetual youth, the grass-blade, like a long green ribbon, streams from the sod into the summer, checked indeed by the frost, but anon pushing on again, lifting its spear of last year's hay with the fresh life below. It grows as steadily as the rill oozes out of the ground.[3]

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[1] Matthiessen, op. cit., pp. 45-46.

[2] Atkinson, op. cit., Nature, p. 42.

[3] Henry David Thoreau, Walden (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1946), p. 273.

Through the grass imagery, Thoreau explains rebirth from the old. Last year's grass dies and nourishes the earth so that this year's new grass can grow from the old roots and push the dead grass aside. Through this imagery, Thoreau draws an analogy between the grass and man: "So our human life but dies down to its root, and still puts forth its green blade to eternity."[1]

This reawakening in the springtime is from the heat of the land. From this heat the flowing begins:

> When the frost comes out in the spring, and even in a thawing day in the winter, the sand begins to flow down the slopes like lava, sometimes bursting out through snow and overflowing it where no sand was to be seen before.[2]

Thoreau again makes a comparison with man in questioning: "What is man but a mass of thawing clay?"[3]

Thoreau beautifully and effectively uses the organic theory in writing about the organic theory, as he describes how God patented the leaf and uses it over and over again:

> Thus it seemed that this one hillside illustrated the principle of all the operations of Nature. The Maker of this earth but patented a leaf . . . True, it is somewhat excrementitious in its character, and there is no end to the heaps of liver, lights, and bowels, as if the glove were turned wrong side outward; but this suggests at least that Nature has some bowels, and there again is mother of humanity. This is the frost coming out of the ground; this is Spring. It precedes the green and flowery spring . . . It convinces

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[1] Ibid., p. 271.

[2] Ibid., p. 268.

[3] Ibid., p. 270.

> me that Earth is still in her swaddling-clothes, and stretches forth baby fingers on every side. Fresh curls spring from the baldest brow. There is nothing inorganic.[1]

In comparison with Thoreau, Emerson metaphorically speaks of spring as:

> The sordor and filths of nature, the sun shall dry up and the wind exhale. As when the summer comes from the south the snow-banks melt and the face of the earth becomes green before it, so shall the advancing spirit create its ornaments along its path, and carry with it the beauty it visits and the song which enchants it . . .[2]

Emerson's passage does not seem to develop organically as do Thoreau's writings. Emerson seems more concerned about setting up a plan for future writers, especially poets, to follow, than about attempting to give extensive examples of the organic style or theory.

In developing his concept of nature, however, Emerson does use the organic theory to show characteristics of nature. Emerson states that "the whole of nature is a metaphor of the human mind."[3] Thought is supreme, and nature is its vehicle. Art is organic for Emerson in a double sense; not merely is the appropriate form an expressive growth from the poet's intuition, but that intuition, in turn, is an outwelling from the universal mind. Therefore, "Beauty in art springs from man's response

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[1] Ibid., p. 268.

[2] Atkinson, op. cit., Nature, p. 42.

[3] Ibid.

to forms in nature."[1] Emerson rejoices that in the strict reliance of art upon nature, the artist works not as he will, but as he must. Emerson feels that in seeing a noble building, which rhymes well, just as in hearing a perfect song, that it is spiritually organic; that is, it has a necessity in Nature for being and is one of the possible forms in the Divine Mind and is now only discovered and executed by the artist. It is not, then, arbitrarily composed by him.[2] Matthiessen feels, however, that Emerson mistakes his end as he forgets that the fact is not the form, "that no more than language is the sound of a bird or a waterfall, is his poem a part of nature."[3]

Matthiessen contends that Emerson's poem, "The Snow-Storm" is poetry that failed.[4] In "The Snow-Storm" Emerson shows the wind as a mason with the snow:

> Come see the northwind's masonry.
> Out of an unseen quarry evermore
> Furnished with tile, the fierce artificer
> Curves his white bastions with projected roof
> Round every windward stake, or tree, or door.[5]

The wind and snow make Art; man can only imitate slowly what nature did so easily:

> . . . astonished Art
> To mimic in slow structure, stone by stone,

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[1] Matthiessen, op. cit., p. 135.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., p. 137.

[4] Ibid., p. 138.

[5] Atkinson, op. cit., "The Snow-Storm," p. 768.

> Built in an age, the man wind's night-work,
> The frolic architecture of the snow.[1]

As is shown in "The Snow-Storm," the organic theory holds that a work of art should imitate projects and patterns in nature. "More obviously, art should imitate the purely organic forms of nature."[2] Matthiessen feels that Emerson fails in his poetry to present the organic principle. Yet Emerson does show one facet of the organic theory of man's attempting to imitate nature's works. Emerson even uses paradox in "The Snow-Storm"--something Feidelson thinks Emerson does not use.[3]

It is a characteristic of Emerson that he makes no distinction between the word and the visual image, just as he tries to eliminate the distinctions between word and thought, word and thing.[4] Or, as Emerson states:

> A man conversing in earnest, if he watch his intellectual processes, will find that a material image more or less luminous arises in his mind, contemporaneous with every thought, which furnishes the vestment of the thought. Hence, good writing and brilliant discourse are perpetual allegories. This imagery is spontaneous. It is the blending of experience with the present action of the mind. It is proper creation. It is the working of the Original Cause through the instruments he has already made.[5]

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[1] Ibid., p. 769.

[2] Carpenter, op. cit., p. 99.

[3] See above page 45.

[4] Feidelson, op. cit., p. 298.

[5] Atkinson, op. cit., Nature, p. 17.

Good writing, then, would be allegory which did not aim to be allegorical. The metaphor is defined as "nature is one thing and the other thing at the same moment."[1] Figures of speech represent spiritual truth symbolically.[2] Therefore, Emerson's art is organic in that it reproduces the moral law as reflected in nature.[3] As Emerson metaphorically explains:

> In the woods, too, a man casts off his year, as the snake his slough, and at that period soever of life is always a child. In the woods is perpetual youth . . . In the woods we return to reason and faith. There I feel that nothing can befall me in life--no disgrace, no calamity (leaving me my eyes), which nature cannot repair. Standing on the bare ground--my head bathed by the blithe air and uplifted into infinite space--all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eyeball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or parcel of God.[4]

Thus, man becomes a child and also a part of God. Emerson also explains this idea that an adult usually cannot see nature, or he has very superficial seeing. "The sun illuminates only the eye of the man, but shines into the eye and the heart of the child.[5] This same idea is found in religion:

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[1] Feidelson, op. cit., p. 147.

[2] Allen, op. cit., p. 96.

[3] Robert E. Spiller, Willard Thorpe, et al., Literary History of United States, Vol. I (New York: Macmillan Company, 1948), p. 381.

[4] Atkinson, op. cit., Nature, p. 6.

[5] Ibid.

> Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.[1]

Feidelson professes that when Emerson says that the perception of symbols enables man to see both the poetic construction of things and the primary relation of mind to matter, and this same perception normally creates the whole apparatus of poetic expression, he is identifying poetry with symbolism. Symbolism with a mode of perception and symbolic perception with the vision is, first, of a symbolic structure in the real world, and, second, is of a symbolic relationship between nature and mind. Poetic vision is, therefore, the perception of the symbolic character of things. Poetic structure, the form of this vision, is attained when the poet no longer sees snow as snow, or horses as horses, but only sees or names them representatively for those interior facts which they signify.[2]

Emerson explains the above idea in "The Poet." He considers the usage of symbols as having a certain power of emancipation and exhilaration for all men. He then likens man, again, to a child:

> We seem to be touched by a wand which makes us dance and run about happily, like children.[3]

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[1] Mark 10:15.

[2] Feidelson, op. cit., p. 120.

[3] Atkinson, op. cit., "The Poet," p. 334.

Emerson wants to convey the idea of the poets being the liberating gods. Thus, he uses figurative language to reveal the sensual pleasure of using symbols:

> We are like persons who come out of a cave or cellar into the open air. This is the effect on us of tropes, fables, oracles and all poetic forms. Poets are thus liberating gods.[1]

One cannot leave this idea of Emerson's organic theory without discussing his circle symbolism. Certainly here Emerson shows that the moral law is reflected in nature. Metaphorically, he states:

> Who looks upon a river in a meditative hour and is not reminded of the flux of all things? Throw a stone into the stream and the circles that propagate themselves are the beautiful type of all influence. Man is conscious of a universal soul within or behind his individual life, wherein, as in a firmament, the natures of Justice, Truth, Love, Freedom, arise and shine.[2]

In the essay, "Circles," Emerson contends:

> The eye is the first circle; the horizon which it forms is the second; and throughout nature this primary figure is repeated without end. It is the highest emblem in the cipher of the world. St. Augustine described the nature of God as a circle whose centre was everywhere and its circumference nowhere.[3]

Emerson presents the circle image in the introductory poem of "Circles" as "Nature centres into balls."[4]

One can then see that Emerson does make use of the organic theory and the fluxional symbol. Through his presentation of what the true poet must do, Emerson is able to

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid., Nature, p. 15.

[3] Ibid., "The Poet," p. 279.

[4] Ibid.

show an important concept of nature. Nature is transitional, fluxional, and ever new. Most importantly, nature is a symbol to some spiritual truth, as every physical or natural law corresponds with a moral law.

Emerson uses the symbol, the metaphor, the simile, and/or tropes to convey his concept of nature. Some metaphors have been previously listed as also representing other literary devices. As a representative sampling, Emerson uses the metaphor to show beauty in nature. Clouds are "pink flakes"[1] and "slender bars (that) float like fishes in the sea of crimson light."[2] In the forest, the "stems of pines and hemlocks gleam like iron,"[3] and the "leafless trees become spires of flame."[4]

Although Emerson's metaphors and symbols may not be organic in that they are contrived to show the poet what he must do, Emerson uses symbolism to show other characteristics of nature. Emerson uses personification, as shown in Chapter III, and symbolism to show religion in nature. As stated before: "Therefore is Nature ever the ally of Religion: lends all her pomp and riches to the religious sentiment."[5] Through the usage of symbols, metaphors, and similes, Emerson is able to clarify his concept of nature.

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[1] Ibid., Nature, p. 10.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., "Nature," p. 407.

[4] Ibid., Nature, p. 10.

[5] Ibid., p. 23.

The organic theory and his theory of correspondences are strengthened by the usage of these literary devices.

CHAPTER V

ALLUSIONS IN NATURE

Bixby states that Emerson's essays "glisten with apt literary allusions and illustrations" and that Emerson, like Shakespeare, adorns and transforms what he took from others.[1] One can agree with Bixby that both authors borrowed from others, but from reading both Shakespeare and Emerson, one concludes that Shakespeare far exceeds Emerson in the use of allusions for effect.

In "Nature" Emerson alludes to the wind as the echoes of a horn in the Notch Mountains which "convert the mountains into an Aeolian harp."[2] Aeolus, the king of the winds, was a Greek god of the earth. The Aeolian harp is transcendental as the music is made by God. No human hand is used to present the music and the instrument itself is made by nature alone. The Aeolian harp idea has been considered truly romantic as the wind makes the music; therefore, it is entirely consistent for Emerson to use this allusion. Additional wind allusions are found in Nature. For example, Emerson states that Aeolus's boy carries the "two and thirty winds in the boiler of his boat."[3]

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[1] James T. Bixby, "Emerson as Writer and Man," Arena, XXXIX (May, 1908), 539.

[2] Atkinson, op. cit., "Nature," p. 409.

[3] Ibid., Nature, p. 8.

Emerson professes that man must seek God in nature. Naturally one would think that many biblical allusions would be used by Emerson in his concept of nature. This is true. He states that "all the creatures by pairs and by trives pour into his [the poet's] mind as into a Noah's ark, to come forth again to people a new world."[1] He uses an allusion to Paul to aid in understanding both the natural and the spiritual world:

> The seed of a plant--to what affecting analogies in the nature of man is that little fruit made use of, in all discourse, up to the voice of Paul, who calls the human corpse as seed--"It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body."[2]

Here Emerson shows the correspondence theory that every physical or natural law corresponds with a moral law. As man's physical body is buried, the soul is raised.

In showing how nature is made to serve, he clarifies this point by an allusion to Jesus:

> Nature is thoroughly mediate. It is made to serve. It receives the dominion of man as meekly as the ass on which the Savior rode.[3]

Nature is here used by man, and man is carried through life on nature as was the Saviour on the ass. It is important to note that the Saviour rode in triumph into Jeruselum, and, if the analogy holds true, man rides in triumph over nature.

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[1] Ibid., "The Poet," p. 340.

[2] Ibid., Nature, p. 16.

[3] Ibid., p. 22.

In "Fate," one of Emerson's later writings, however, Emerson refutes this idea that man has complete control over nature.

Emerson furthers the idea of God in nature by saying:

> Therefore is Nature ever the ally of Religion: lends all her pomp and riches to the religious sentiment. Prophet and priest, David, Isaiah, Jesus, have drawn deeply from this source.[1]

Emerson constantly alludes to God and His close relationship with and to nature. As man must seek God in nature, Biblical allusions do aid in understanding and in showing Emerson's concept of nature.

Emerson refers to many Greek myths in understanding nature. Most of the Greek gods alluded to are of nature:

> . . . thou [the true poet] must pass for a fool and a churl for a long season. This is the screen and sheath in which Pan has protected his well-beloved flower . . .[2]

Here Emerson shows Pan, the chief god of earth, not as the gay companion of the woodland nymphs, but as a protector of them. He continues this idea in "Nature":

> Frivolity is a most unfit tribute to Pan, who ought to be represented in the mythology as the most continent of gods.[3]

Pan is chaste rather than the would-be lover of a nymph and the noisy, merry, goat-like god.

Emerson refers to many gods and goddesses, each representing a part of nature. Sometimes he is just listing

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[1] Ibid., p. 23.

[2] Ibid., "The Poet," p. 340.

[3] Ibid., "Nature," pp. 410-411.

these goddesses: "the door for remote Flora, Fauna, Ceres, and Pomona to come in."[1] These are goddesses of the flowers, the fields, the corn, and the orchards and gardens respectively. In the above case, all these goddesses of nature are fertility gods. "Apollo, Diana, and all divine hunters and huntresses"[2] fall into the above category as the goddesses of truth, light, or the sun, and the chief huntsman or goddess of the moon. Emerson refers to the gods of the sky, the lower world, and the sea in like manner:

> For the Universe has three children, born at one time, which reappear under different names in every system of thought, whether they be called cause, operation and effect; or, more poetically, Jove, Pluto, Neptune; or, theologically, the Father, the Spirit and the Son; but which we will call here the Knower, the Doer and the Sayer. These stand respectively for the love of truth, for the love of good, and for the love of beauty.[3]

Here, as with Pan and the other gods and goddesses of nature, Emerson presents nature as god-like. Nature has risen above the mundane and becomes glamorized. Fertility is placed on a superior plane by man.

As an early Transcendentalist, Emerson was greatly influenced by European philosophers: Kant and Hegel of Germany; Swedenborg of Sweden; Carlyle and Coleridge of England. He was also influenced by the Neo-Platonists and

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[1] Ibid., p. 412.

[2] Ibid., p. 409.

[3] Ibid., "The Poet," p. 321.

by Oriental Scriptures, thus, in Emerson's writings, he makes reference to them. He discusses Swedenborg as the "translator of nature into thought."[1] Even though Emerson admires Swedenborg's theories and great ability, Emerson criticizes him as a mystic, who defines the meaning of each symbol too narrowly:

> Everything on which his eye rests, obeys the impulses of moral nature. The figs become grapes whilst he eats them. When some of his angels affirmed a truth, the laurel twig which they held blossomed in their hands.[2]

Through this allusion to Swedenborg, one can see Emerson's ideas on mysticism and true poetry.

Plato, to Emerson, is a representative man with an original mind. Emerson oftentimes alludes to Plato. He quotes Plato in saying:

> "The problem of philosophy," according to Plato "is, for all that exists conditionally, to find a ground unconditioned and absolute."[3]

He again admits to accepting Plato's views:

> In view of this half-sight of science, we accept the sentence of Plato, that "poetry comes nearer to vital truth than history."[4]

Emerson quotes the Greeks as in Nature he states: "Ancient Greeks called the world beauty."[5] He alludes to Homer, the great Greek epic poet; to Pindar, the Greek lyric

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[1] Ibid., p. 337.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., Nature, p. 31.

[4] Ibid., p. 39.

[5] Ibid., p. 9.

poet famous for grandeur of style; to Socrates, the great Greek philosopher and teacher; and to many of the lesser-known Greek writers and philosophers: Empedocles, Heraclitus, Plutarch, Proclus, and Pythagoras.[1]

Emerson alludes to men in all walks of life: Haydn,[2] the Austrian composer of the 1700's; Manes,[3] the Persian who taught a system compounded of Zorastrian dualism and Christian soteriology. According to Manes' system, man's soul, sprung from the Kingdom of Light, seeks escape from the Kingdom of Darkness, the body. This philosophy, Manichean, can be seen in Emerson's view of life. Emerson alludes to Michael Angelo,[4] the Italian architech and poet; George Herbert,[5] the English poet of the late 1500's; Dante,[6] the great Italian poet; Vitruvius,[7] the Roman architect of the first century B. C.; George Chapman,[8] an English dramatist of the 1500's; Chaucer,[9] an English poet of the 1300's; Agrippa,[10] a Roman statesman; and Kepler,[11] a German astronomer. Each of these allusions is to a great man of the past. Emerson is better understood by knowing

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[1] Ibid., "The Poet," pp. 320-334.

[2] Ibid., Nature, p. 24.

[3] Ibid., p. 32.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid., p. 39.

[6] Ibid., "The Poet," p. 320.

[7] Ibid., p. 334.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid., p. 335.

[11] Ibid.

what great men influenced him. Emerson's writings are enriched by reference to these great men of the past.

Emerson presents the "rich" poets:

> . . . as Homer, Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Raphael, [who] have obviously no limits to their works except the limits of their lifetime, and resemble a mirror carried through the street, ready to render an image of every created thing.[1]

Emerson quotes from these poets' works in his essays. These citations aid Emerson in elaborating on specific ideas. The reader, in turn, learns not only about these poets' writings, but about Emerson's viewpoint on the writings.

For example, Emerson states that:

> Shakespeare possesses the power of subordinating nature for the purposes of expression, beyond all poets . . . We are made aware that magnitude of material things is relative, and all objects shrink and expand to serve the passion of the poet. Thus in his sonnets, the lays of birds, the scents and dyes of flowers he finds to be the shadow of his beloved; time, which keeps her from him, is his chest; the suspicion she has awakened, is her ornament . . .[2]

Then, to further illustrate the fact that material objects undergo a transfiguration through the passion of the poet, Emerson quotes from Ariel and Prospero in Shakespeare's The Tempest:

> ARIEL. The strong based promontory
> Have I made shake, and by the spurs plucked up
> The pine and cedar.

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[1] Ibid., p. 340.

[2] Ibid., Nature, p. 29.

PROSPERO. A solemn air, and the best comforter
To an unsettled fancy, cure thy brains
Now useless, boiled within thy skull.[1]

Probably the most obvious allusion to nature is in Emerson's Nature as he speaks of the ancients: "The dawn is my Assyria; the sunset and moonrise my Paphos";[2] and of the modern countries: "broad noon shall be my England . . . the night shall be my Germany of mystic philosophy and dreams!"[3] Certainly his last allusion to Germany would refer to Kant and the other German idealists who influenced Emerson. These phrases are elaborate poetic wordings, but they give forth a lovely effect with their mythological allusions.

Emerson's allusions further his concept of nature in several ways. His Biblical allusions effectively show nature and its intimacy with God. By using allusions to the gods and goddesses of nature, Emerson gives nature an upward lift and improves the stature of nature. Emerson's allusions to great men, great writers and their writings, show how Emerson's philosophy of nature evolved as he borrowed from many of the great writers of the past.

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[1] Ibid., p. 30.

[2] Ibid., Nature, p. 10.

[3] Ibid.

CHAPTER VI

SYNECDOCHE AND MINOR LITERARY DEVICES IN NATURE

When Emerson states that there is no fact in nature which does not carry the whole sense of nature, and that the entire system of things is represented in every particle, he is defining synecdoche. Therefore, Emerson often uses the literary device of synecdoche as he describes parts of nature as representing the whole of nature. Synecdoche is constantly used in all previous literary devices discussed in the preceding chapters.

Emerson is, therefore, carrying out the each and all theory discussed in Chapter II. As Emerson states in his poem, "Each and All":

> All are needed by each one;
> Nothing is fair or good alone.[1]

Besides showing a part of nature as the whole, Emerson even uses a portion of a part of nature to further subdivide. For example, he states: "There is more wool and flax in the fields."[2] This gives only wool for sheep and flax for grain.

As previously mentioned, Emerson catalogs parts of nature representing all of nature. In Nature he states the following:

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[1] Whicher, op. cit., "Each and All," p. 413.

[2] Atkinson, op. cit., Nature, p. 3.

> The primary forms, as the sky, the mountain, the tree, the animal, give us a delight in and for themselves.[1]

Or, again in Nature, he tells that "the leaf, a sunbeam, a landscape, the ocean, make an analogous impression on the mind."[2]

Certainly Emerson uses synecdoche and uses it well to aid in explaining parts of nature as representing the whole of nature. Or, as Emerson explained in his Second Series essay on "Nature":

> That power which does not respect quantity, which makes the whole and the particle its equal channel, delegates its smile to the morning, and distils its essence into every drop of rain.[3]

There are countless illustrations of Emerson's showing parts of nature, but these parts represent the whole:

> But besides this general grace diffused over nature, almost all the individual forms are agreeable to the eye, as is proved by our endless imitations of some of them, as the acorn, the grape, the pine-cone, the wheat-ear, the egg, the wings and forms of most birds, the lion's claw, the serpent, the butterfly, sea-shells, flames, trees, as the palm.[4]

Here Emerson states that the parts of nature are actually imitations of one another. He seems to be using a theory similar to Thoreau's lobe theory. Thoreau explains that all parts of man's body and of nature are imitations of the lobe:

> The ear may be regarded, fancifully, as a lichen, on the side of the head, with its lobe or drop . . .

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[1] Ibid., p. 9.

[2] Ibid., p. 13.

[3] Ibid., "Nature," p. 421.

[4] Ibid., Nature, p. 9.

> The nose is a manifest congealed drop or stalactite. The chin is a still larger drop . . . Each rounded lobe of the vegetable leaf, too, is a thick and now loitering drop, larger or smaller; the lobes are the fingers of the leaf; and as many lobes as it has, in so many directions tends to flow, and more heat or other genial influences would have caused it to flow yet farther.[1]

or, again, as Emerson states it:

> For although the works of nature are innumerable and all different, the result or the expression of them all is similar and single. Nature is a sea of forms radically alike and even unique. A leaf, a sunbeam, a landscape, the ocean, make an analogous impression on the mind. What is common to them all--that perfectness and harmony, is beauty . . . Nothing is quite beautiful alone; nothing is beautiful in the whole. A single object is only so far beautiful as it suggests this universal grace.[2]

In the poem "Brahma," Emerson reiterates the idea of unity in variety:

> Far or forgot to me is near;
> Shadow or sunlight is the same.[3]

Possibly the most beautifully stated form of the theory is in Emerson's Nature:

> . . . a leaf, a drop, a crystal, a moment of time, is related to the whole and partakes of the perfection of the whole. Each particle is a microcosm, and faithfully renders the likeness of the world.[4]

Here Emerson is saying that each drop of water is a universe in itself, but it is a part of the whole world.

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[1] Thoreau, op. cit., pp. 270-271.

[2] Atkinson, op. cit., Nature, pp. 13-14.

[3] Ibid., "Brahma," p. 809.

[4] Ibid., Nature, p. 24.

So no one can miss the point, Emerson states plainly:

> Every creature is only a modification of the other; the likeness in them is more than the difference, and their radical law is one and the same. A rule of one art, or a law of one organization, holds true throughout nature. So intimate is this Unity, that, it is easily seen, it lies under the undermost garment of Nature, and betrays its source in Universal Spirit. For it pervades Thought also. Every universal truth which we express in words, implies or supposes every other truth.[1]

Emerson now carries the unity in variety theory into the theory of correspondence: Every natural fact is a symbol of some spiritual fact. Thus, as all things in nature are modifications of one another, so also are universal truths modifications of other truths.

Emerson's essays are filled with good illustrations of his unity in variety theory of nature. Another such vivid example is:

> Man is the dwarf of himself. Once he was permeated and dissolved by spirit. He filled nature with his overflowing currents. Out from him sprang the sun and moon; from man the sun, from woman the moon. The laws of his mind, the periods of his actions externized themselves into day and night, into the year and the seasons. But, having made for himself this huge shell, his waters retired; he no longer fills the veins and veinlets; he is shrunk to a drop . . .[2]

Man is at once a microcosm and macrocosm; he is both a little world and the entire universe. As a dwarf, man is the little world, possibly even just a seed of life, but man can also be a representation of the entire universe.

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[1] Ibid., pp. 24-25.

[2] Ibid., pp. 39-40.

Emerson sees man not in matter, but in spirit. Man can transcend into the universal man.

Throughout these quotations, one sees the concept of evolution. Emerson anticipates Darwin's The Origin of Species which was not published until 1859--over twenty years after Emerson's writing of Nature. Darwin's theory of evolution is seen again and again as each living thing in nature is a modification or imitation of another living thing, thus one part of nature may evolve into another part of nature.

Dualism is represented in man as man is shown in both the physical and spiritual sense:

> A man is a god in ruins. When men are innocent, life shall be longer, and shall pass into the immortal as gently as we awake from dreams.[1]

Emerson is both mystic and pragmatic. Emerson states that knowledge is good only when used, but his knowledge is of God and Soul. The Me is the Soul; the Not Me is the physical universe. The universe, in Emerson's words, "is composed of Nature and the Soul."[2] Again, nature is the physical and the Soul is the spiritual. Emerson tells that man has the Divine Being within him as shown by Emerson's mystic experience of being a transparent eyeball. The Universal Being is the eyeball, Emerson the being; so he is part of

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[1] Ibid., p. 39.

[2] Ibid., p. 4.

God. The spirit and material must join together for meaning. Visible nature must have a nonphysical side; thus we have dualism in nature.

Through the usage of synecdoche, Emerson is able to vividly illustrate that the parts of nature represent the whole of nature. Emerson not only illustrates the unity in variety or each and all theory, but also shows the evolution concept of nature and the dualism found in nature. Emerson's illustrations are vivid, concrete, and easily understood in developing these concepts of nature.

In keeping with his desire to show nature in all its beauty and glory, Emerson avoids using any litotes at all. Rather than understate, he chooses to exaggerate to heighten the effect on the reader.

Emerson states in Nature that "The sun illuminates only the eye of the man, but shines into the eye and heart of the child."[1] He states that the south wind "converts all trees to wind-harps."[2] Here he is returning to the Aeolian harp idea previously discussed. Emerson seems to appreciate hyperbole as he mentions it while discussing some of Shakespeare's writings. Emerson quotes from Shakespeare's poetry:

> Take those lips away
> Which so sweetly were forsworn;

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[1] Ibid., p. 6.

[2] Ibid., "Nature," p. 408.

> And those eyes,--the break of day,
> Lights that do mislead the morn.
>
> The wild beauty of this hyperbole, I may say in passing, it would not be easy to match in literature.[1]

Emerson seems to take pleasure in reading works with hyperbole and even refers to Shakespeare's writing as "wild beauty." Certainly all three of the quotations are gross exaggerations used for effect.

Another obvious exaggeration is found in "The Poet" as Emerson is reading a poem:

> And now my chains are broken; I shall mount above these clouds and opaque airs in which I life--opaque, though they seem transparent--and from the heaven of truth I shall see and comprehend my relations.[2]

Emerson implies that only through poetry can man rise above the earth and transcend into the heavens. Here man can find the moral and spiritual truths.

Emerson states that the poet "puts eyes and a tongue in every dumb and inanimate object."[3] Another exaggeration of what the poet should be able to do is found in knowing the poet's habit of living:

> His (the poet's) cheerfulness should be the gift of the sunlight, the air should suffice for his inspiration, and he should be tipsy with water.[4]

Many other illustrations can be found similar to the above quotation. Emerson has a tendency to exaggerate when

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[1] Ibid., Nature, p. 30.

[2] Ibid., "The Poet," p. 324.

[3] Ibid., p. 328.

[4] Ibid., p. 333.

referring to the poet and what the poet can and must do to show nature. This tendency may be quite objectionable to the reader who is not as exuberant over nature as Emerson obviously is.

Hyperbole definitely overlaps into elaborate wording found in euphuisms. Emerson readily admits that he has euphuistic tendencies. He admits that "as soon as men begin to write on nature, they fall into euphuism."[1] This extravagence of wording may cause artificiality, thus defeating the purpose of Emerson--to show nature as it truly is.

Emerson's best euphuisms can be found in Nature and "The Poet":

> Give me health and a day, and I will make the pomp of emperors ridiculous. The dawn is my Assyria; the sunset and moonrise my Paphos, and unimaginable realms of faerie; broad noon shall be my England of the senses and the understanding; the night shall be my Germany of mystic philosophy and dreams.[2]

In the above quotation Emerson uses balanced construction, illustrations drawn from mythology, and an over-abundance of metaphors--all quite representative of euphuistic writing.

Another excellent example of this euphuistic form is found in the following from Nature:

> Therefore is nature glorious with form, color and motion; that every glove in the remotest heaven, every chemical change from the rudest crystal up to the laws of life, every change of vegetation from the first principle of growth in the eye of a leaf, to the tropical

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[1] Ibid., "Nature," p. 410.

[2] Ibid., Nature, p. 10.

> forest and antediluvian coal-mine, every animal function from the sponge up to Hercules, shall hint or thunder to man the laws of right and wrong, and echo the Ten Commandments.[1]

Here the reader can visualize not only how each creature on earth is beautiful and good, but also how these creatures hint or thunder at having some spiritual truth within their nature.

The entire last paragraph of "The Poet" shows Emerson's exuberant feeling toward the poet and nature:

> Thou shalt have the whole land for thy park and manor, the sea for thy bath and navigation, without tax and without envy; and woods and the rivers thou shalt own, and thou shalt possess that wherein others are only tenants and boarders. Thou true land-lord! sea-lord! air-lord![2]

The above quotation from the last paragraph of "The Poet" is hyperbole as it is a conscious exaggeration to heighten the effect. Through balanced construction and alliteration, the remainder of the paragraph seems to be more euphuistic. Wherever is repeated to give the balanced construction and alliteration. The sentence itself builds to a climax and becomes an excellent ending to the essay on "The Poet," as the paragraph seems quite poetic. In the form, style, and construction of Whitman, the sentence can become a poem:

> Wherever snow falls or water flows or birds fly,
> Wherever day and night meet in twilight,
> Wherever the blue heaven is hung by clouds or sown with stars,

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[1] Ibid., p. 23.

[2] Ibid., "The Poet," p. 340.

Wherever are forms with transparent boundaries,
Wherever are outlets into celestial space,
Wherever is danger, and awe, and love,--
There is Beauty, plenteous as rain, shed for thee.[1]

How effective is Emerson in using euphuisms? Emerson seems to feel the need for the extravagence and artificiality of euphuistic wording and hyperbole, but the twentieth century reader usually finds this wording totally ornate and old-fashioned in style and form. Certainly Emerson is able to convey to the reader his feeling that there is nothing greater than having a "true" poet when he writes, "Thou true land-lord! sea-lord! air-lord!"[2]

Through the poet, Emerson lifts nature from the common earth and carries it across the heavens. Emerson sees the poet as God-given, thus both poet and nature transcend beyond and above life here on earth. This seems quite incongruous with the poet becoming tipsy from drinking water from a wooden bowl, yet Emerson shows both sides to give a specific effect. Man is close to nature by drinking the water from a wooden bowl, yet man or the poet can take these common things of nature and transcend nature to the heavens.

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

What is Emerson's concept of nature as manifested through his literary devices? No one-sentence statement can answer that question. Nature in the most simplified form is defined by Emerson:

> Philosophically considered, the universe is composed of Nature and the Soul. Strictly speaking, therefore, all that is separate from us, all which Philosophy distinguishes as the NOT ME, that is, both nature and art, all other men and my own body, must be ranked under this name, NATURE . . . I shall use the word in both senses--in its common and in its philosophical import . . . Nature, in the common sense, refers to essences unchanged by man; space, the air, the river, the leaf.[1]

Through sensory imagery, Emerson reveals the quality of beauty in nature. Nature is soft to the touch and quiet or harmonious to the ear. It is sweetly fragranted and beautifully colored. Nature, then, is pleasing to the eyes, ears, and touch of man.

By personification Emerson shows nature as the loving mother. She is warm, tender, protective, soft, sweet, religious, beautiful, colorful, persuasive, and self-sufficient. Mother nature is found teaching, loving, and comforting.

Through symbols and metaphors, nature develops into a fluxional, changing, transitional and always-new beauty:

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[1] Ibid., Nature, p. 4.

> To the attentive eye, each moment of the year has its own beauty and in the same field, it beholds, every hour, a picture which was never seen before and which shall never be seen again. The heavens change every moment, and reflect their glory or gloom on the plains beneath.[1]

In developing his concept of nature, Emerson discusses his philosophy and theories in relation to nature. The unity in variety theory is developed through nature as Emerson shows time and time again that there is no fact in nature which does not carry the whole sense of nature and that the entire system of things is represented in every particle:

> . . . a leaf, a drop, a crystal, a moment of time, is related to the whole and partakes of the perfection of the whole. Each particle is a microcosm, and faithfully renders the likeness of the world.[2]

From this theory, he develops his idea of the evolution of nature and the system of transition.

The correspondence theory is revealed through literary devices of nature. Nature is a symbol of some spiritual truth as every physical or natural law corresponds with a moral law:

> Who looks upon a river in a meditative hour and is not reminded of the flux of all things? Throw a stone into the stream and the circles that propagate themselves are the beautiful type of all influence. Man is conscious of a universal soul within or behind his individual life, wherein, as in a firmament, the

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[1] Ibid., pp. 10-11.

[2] Ibid., p. 24.

> natures of Justice, Truth, Love, Freedom, arise and shine.[1]

From the correspondence theory, Emerson develops his doctrine of symbols showing that all material objects of nature are symbols of truth.

Emerson explains the organic style as its growing out of Nature. The symbols and metaphors are not to be deliberately contrived, but should come from inspiration. The Over-Soul, or divine spirit in man, aids man in his writing of nature. One's genius is from God within--the Universal Mind.

Constantly Emerson alludes to the need of man to be in close harmony with nature. Man lives through nature, thus man needs nature as nature needs man. If man lives through nature, then man may be close to his religion and to true poetry. Man, nature, God, and poetry are all to be in close harmony.

One flaw of Emerson results from his idealistic view of nature. Emerson sees only what he wishes to see. He looks to the sky as it is more pleasing to view than the earth. Naturalistic, ugly parts of nature are omitted. His theory of good and evil is that evil is the absence of good and "evils of the world are such only to the evil eye."[2]

Emerson presents a passive nature most of the time, yet he shows Mother Nature as quite persuasive. This seems

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[1] Ibid., p. 15.

[2] Ibid., "The Poet," p. 327.

to be a paradoxical situation for nature.

Emerson reiterates the need to be close to nature many times. Yet Emerson himself does not become close enough to nature in his essays. His sensory imagery does not reveal vivid, concrete images, but rather a view of nature from afar. He lacks the vividness and specificity that he asks for in the true poet.

Emerson asks for simplicity in man's return to nature. Yet Emerson, in his simplicity, implements hyperbole and euphuisms of nature--a far cry from the simplicity he applauds in his essays.

Literary devices used by Emerson oftentimes are not unique, but borrowed from the writers of the past. Emerson seems again to say to the writers of the future: Do not write as I write, but as I tell you to write. Emerson seems unable to show his true feelings; he is too sophisticated to lie on the ground and see nature closely and minutely as Thoreau succeeds in doing.

In spite of Emerson's problems in developing the complex concept of nature, he is able to achieve this development to a degree. He does show a faithful picture of nature as the eternal trinity: Truth, Goodness, and Beauty.[1]

Intellect is primary and nature is secondary to Emerson; thus his law of nature summarizes his philosophy. Through nature Emerson is able to write concretely of his

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[1] Ibid., "The Transcendentalist," p. 101.

theory of correspondences, his unity in variety theory, his theory on organic symbols, and his transcendental ideas. This concreteness in his theories would not be possible without the use of literary devices.

Emerson certainly stresses the importance of figures of speech in his development of the language section in Nature and in his essay, "The Poet." Although not as concrete as Thoreau's, Emerson's style is an extension of his theory. He relies on imagery, symbols, and metaphors to make his essays rich in epigrams. Emerson tries to use common sense, moderation, simple style and everyday experiences, yet he has "elevation and intensity conveyed by the symbol."[1]

One can envision nature as the "beautiful mother" and understand Emerson's point of view. Though some authors may excel beyond Emerson's style, Emerson's uses of visual imagery and personification are outstanding examples of how to enrich one's imagination, how to clarify one's ideas, and how to vivify the image for the word nature.

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[1] Allen, op. cit., p. 94.

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